

GOVERNOR LINDA LINGLE
2006 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS
Renewing Our Commitment to the People of Hawai'i
January 23, 2006

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Lt. Governor and Mrs. Aiona, members of the Legislature, Chief Justice Moon, Chair Apoliona, cabinet members, military leaders, members of the counselor corps, distinguished guests, and to all the people of Hawai'i.

Aloha and good morning.

It is a great privilege to once again come before you to talk about our state's future. It is a hallmark of American democracy that governors across our nation are given the opportunity to speak freely about the challenges their states face as well as their hopes and dreams for the future.

This, and other freedoms we too often take for granted, are being fought for today in distant lands across the globe.

Thousands of miles away, countries that suffered under tyranny for decades are now budding democracies because of America's leadership and sacrifice.

In the recent elections in Iraq, people walked as far as eight miles just to exercise their right to vote.

Thanks to the efforts of America's armed forces, democracy is gaining a foothold in Iraq and Afghanistan, and we in America are safer.

While in Iraq, our own Hawai'i National Guard 29th Brigade Combat Team conducted thousands of patrols, destroyed dozens of weapons stockpiles and detained hundreds of insurgents.

Perhaps equally important, these American soldiers provided thousands of Iraqi citizens with clothing, food, purified water, shoes, school supplies and medical care.

And they provided Iraqi citizens with a sense of hope and security that resulted in a voter turnout of 90% in the sector patrolled by the 29th Brigade.

Allow me to take a moment to recognize some of our heroes who are with us this morning.

Seated in the gallery and just recently returned home from Iraq is the Commander of the 29th Brigade, Brig. General Joe Chavez, Sgt. Major Robert Inouye, members of their brigade, and their families.

These soldiers represent the more than 3,000 men and women of our Hawai'i National Guard and Army Reserve who answered the call of duty and served with honor in Iraq, Kuwait, and Afghanistan.

On behalf of all the citizens of Hawai'i...welcome home, and thank you for your sacrifice and for ensuring a safer world for future generations.

Today it is once again my great privilege to report on the state of our state, and this year's address is made more meaningful by the presence of our soldiers.

2005 will go down in history as one of our best years ever.

The economic indicators are strong, investment is robust, and people are optimistic about the future.

Our work force grew by 3% this year — one of the fastest growth rates in the nation.

Our unemployment rate decreased to below 3% — the lowest in the nation.

Total personal income grew by 8% — the biggest increase since 1990, and the third largest increase in the nation.

Our gross state product — the most comprehensive measure of the economy — increased 4.7% in 2004. That is the biggest increase since 1991, and the fourth biggest increase in the nation.

Visitor arrivals in 2005 are estimated to have reached 7.4 million, the first time in history that we had more than 7 million visitors in a year.

And employment in the construction industry is nearing record levels.

As strong as those numbers are, they alone don't capture the full story of our success during the past year.

We achieved longstanding goals...from opening a new medical school in Kaka'ako...to establishing a refuge to protect our precious marine resources in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

We strengthened our ties to Asia. Our delegation to China and Korea returned with significant agreements covering education and economic development. The businesses that went on the trip already expect to generate more than \$100 million in new business.

For the Governor's full State of the State Address please visit:

<http://www.hawaii.gov/gov/leg/2006%20SOS.pdf>